

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 03210 01 OF 02 231354Z

47

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 IO-14 DPW-01 DRC-01 /106 W

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R 230444Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8660

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 3210

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: PGNU--TWO WEEKS AFTER THE FORMATION

REF: VIENTIANE 2768

BEGIN SUMMARY:THE NEW LAO COALITION GOVERNMENT AND JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL, FORMED MORE THAN TWO WEEKS AGO, HAVE GOTTEN A SLOW START. THE CABINET HAS MET ONLY ONCE, THE COUNCIL NOT AT ALL. LPF MINISTERS ARE TRYING TO GET ON TOP OF THEIR NEW JOBS AND HAVE NOT YET UNDERTAKEN ANY NOTABLE INITIATIVES. PACE IS LIKELY TO PICK UP THIS WEEK, AS (A) JNPC CONVENES, APRIL 25, IN LUANG PRABANG; (B) CABINET SETTLES IN FOR LONG -PROVISIONAL" HAUL; AND (C) JCCIA RESUMES SESSIONS AFTER FOUR WEEK'S RECESS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NEW LAO COALITION GOVERNMENT (PGNU) AND JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL (JNPC), FORMED MORE THAN
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PAGE 02 VIENTI 03210 01 OF 02 231354Z

TWO WEEKS AGO, HAVE BEEN SLOW IN STARTING. INAUGURAL

CEREMONIES TOOK UP MOST OF THE FIRST WEEK, WHILE SECOND WEEK WAS LARGELY DEVOTED TO LAO PI MAI (NEW YEAR) FESTIVITIES IN LUANG PRABANG, WITH PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA, FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT AND OTHER MINISTERS RETURNING TO VIENTIANE ONLY ON APRIL 18. BETWEEN THE CEREMONIES AND FESTIVITIES, MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES OF STATE DID FORMALLY ASSUME THEIR POSTS AND THE CABINET HELD A SINGLE MEETING, APRIL 10. HOWEVER, LAST WEEK'S CABINET MEETING WAS NOT HELD; JOINT CENTRAL COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT (JCCIA) HAS BEEN IN RECESS SINCE MARCH 27; JNPC HAS NOT YET MET; AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S STANDING COMMITTEE HAS BEEN INACTIVE.

2. MEANWHILE, NEW LPF CABINET MINISTERS HAVE APPARENTLY JUST BEEN TRYING TO GET HOLD OF THEIR NEW JOBS AND HAVE NOT UNDERTAKEN ANY NOTABLE POLICY OR PERSONNEL INITIATIVES. WHILE THEY HAVE BROUGHT WITH THEM NEW CHEFS DE CABINET AND PRIVATE SECRETARIES, LPF MINISTERS HAVE UNIFORMLY REASSURED STAFFS THAT THEY DO NOT INTEND TO MAKE EXTENSIVE PERSONNEL CHANGES IN NEAR FUTURE. THEY HAVE MADE AN INITIAL SHOW OF COOPERATING WITH THEIR DEPUTIES FROM VIENTIANE SIDE AND, IN SOME CASES (E.G., SOTH PHETRASY AT PLAN), HAVE OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED A LACK OF FAMILIARITY WITH MINISTRY FUNCTIONS. SLOW START HAS CREATED SOME UNCERTAINTY. ONE OFFICIAL FROM MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS COMPLAINED THAT NEW MINISTER SINGKAPO CHOUNRAMANY HAS SO FAR SELDOM APPEARED AT OFFICE AND THAT WORK IS BEGINNING TO BACK UP. HE SAID SIMILAR SITUATION EXISTS IN SEVERAL OTHER MINISTRIES. SECRETARY GENERAL OF MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TOLD US THAT NEW INFORMATION MINISTER SOUK VONGSAK HAS NOT YET LAID OUT ANY POLICY GUIDELINES AND THAT, IN ABSENCE OF WORD TO CONTRARY, MINISTRY WOULD NOT ALTER OUTPUT OF NATIONAL RADIO OR OFFICIAL LAO PRESSE. HE ADDED THAT SOUK HAS SAID THAT AN LPF EXPERT IN INFORMATION WILL BE COMING TO VIENTIANE SOMETIME IN FUTURE TO PROVIDE "GUIDANCE." HOWEVER, SECSTATE FOR INFORMATION, OUDAY SOUVANNAVONG, HAS INFORMED MINISTRY PERSONNEL THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROVISIONS OF PROTOCOL, STAFF IS TO ACT ONLY ON DIRECTIVES WHICH HE

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 03210 01 OF 02 231354Z

AND SOUK SIGN JOINTLY. NEW TEAM APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN HOLD MOST QUICKLY AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHERE STAFF MORALE HAS PERKED UP CONSIDERABLY. WE HAVE AS YET DETECTED NO CHANGE IN WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY MINISTRY.

3. ONE CHANGE IN DIPLOMATIC ENVIRONMENT WAS, HOWEVER, EVIDENT EVENING APRIL 18 AT UK EMBASSY

CELEBRATION OF QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY, FIRST NATIONAL DAY OBSERVANCE IN VIENTIANE SINCE INVESTITURE OF NEW PGNU. LPF MEMBERS OF NEW GOVERNMENT ATTENDED EVENT. UNIFORMED LPF SECURITY PERSONNEL (WITH JOINT POLICE ARM BANDS) WERE POSTED ALONG STREET, AND ALSO ALONG DRIVEWAY LEADING ONTO RESIDENCE GROUNDS, CLOSE BY RECEIVING LINE. PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, WHO DELIVERED TRADITIONAL TOAST IN FRENCH FOR RLG, HAD TO REFER FREQUENTLY TO NOTE CARD WITH TEXT OF FIVE-LINE TOAST, BUT OTHERWISE LPF MINISTERS SEEMED QUITE AT HOME IN VIENTIANE SOCIAL MILIEU.

4. IT HAS ONLY BEEN ON SUCH CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS THAT LPF SECURITY TROOPS HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY OBTRUSIVE. (PREVIOUS INSTANCES INCLUDED PROTECTION THEY PROVIDED AT RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES APRIL 6 AND FOR PRIME MINISTER'S RECEPTION APRIL 7, WHEN THEY LINED STREETS AT FAIRLY CLOSE INTERVALS WITHOUT COORDINATING WITH, OR BEING JOINED BY VIENTIANE SIDE COLLEAGUES. LATTER OCCASION PROVOKED REMONSTRANCE FROM CHIEF OF VIENTIANE SIDE POLICE THAT LPF HAD TAKEN EXCESSIVE PRECAUTIONS AND THAT PROTECTIVE ARRANGEMENTS HAD NOT BEEN JOINTLY AGREED.) OTHERWISE, POLICE PATROLS HAVE NOT BEEN SEPECIALLY UNUSUAL. LPF JOINED IN PI MAI WATER THROWING, WETTING UP AMBUSCADE WITH BUCKETS AND HOSE AT VIENTIANE'S JOINT HEADQUARTERS OF PROTECTIVE MILITARY FORCE NEAR MONUMENT.

5. TWO-WEEK PERIOD ALSO WITNESSED ENCOURAGING DENOUEMENT OF WORRISOME CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS NEAR SE BANG FAI BRIDGE NORTHEAST OF SAVANNAKHET. LPF TOOK TWO VIENTIANE SIDE POSITIONS IN THAT AREA, APRIL 7-8, PROMPTING SOME JOURNALISTS TO SOUND ALARMS THAT
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PAGE 04 VIENTI 03210 01 OF 02 231354Z

ACTION IMPERILLED SETTLEMENT. FAR TROOPS RECOVERED POSITIONS BY APRIL 14, AGAINST LITTLE ENEMY OPPOSITION. FAR SPOKESMAN DID NOT PUBLICIZE LATTER EVENT AND IT DID NOT GET MUCH COVERAGE IN PRESS.

6. EVEN IN LAOS, EUPHORIA OF PAST COUPLE WEEKS CANNOT

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 03210 02 OF 02 231513Z

47

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NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

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R 230444Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8661
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMCONSUL UDORN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 3210

LAST INDEFINITELY. IN FACT, IT IS LIKELY TO BE
DISPELLED VERY QUICKLY, BEGINNING APRIL 25 WHEN THE
JNPC CONVENES FOR ITS FIRST 30-DAY SESSION IN LUANG
PRABANG. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, APRIL 22, SENT
"VERY URGENT" DIPLOMATIC CIRCULAR NOTE INVITING CHIEFS
FO MISSION TO ATTEND OPENING SESSION AT WHICH KING
WILL BE PRESENT. WITH ACTIVATION OF JNPC, A NUMBER
OF CRUCIAL ISSUES WILL ARISE, INCLUDING COUNCIL'S
RELATIONSHIP WITH PGNU AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. LPF,
QUOTING PROTOCOL, HAVE EMPHASIZED THE JNPC'S "EQUAL
AND INDEPENDENT" RELATIONSHIP WITH PGNU. IN HIS STATE-
MENT AT FIRST CABINET MEETING, APRIL 10, PHOUMI
ASSERTED THAT PGNU WILL BE GUIDED BY POLITICAL PROGRAM
ADOPTED BY JNPC. HARD MANEUVERING CAN BE EXPECTED
AS THE UNEASY AND COMPETITIVE PGNU/JNPC
RELATIONSHIP EVOLVES; AND, OF COURSE, IT IS NOT
CERTAIN THAT THE DIFFERENCES IN SUCH A STRUGGLE WILL
HEW STRICTLY TO LINES BETWEEN LPF AND VIENTIANE SIDE.

7. ON OTHER HAND, LPF WILL NO DOUBT BE UNITED IN VIEW
THAT JNPC SUPPLANTS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND, IF ASSEMBLY
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PAGE 02 VIENTI 03210 02 OF 02 231513Z

CONVENES, AS CONSTITUTIONALLY SCHEDULED, AT CEREMONIES
PRESIDED BY KING, MAY 11, IT WILL DRAW FIRE FROM ALL
LPF ELEMENTS. KING PRESUMABLY WILL DESIRE TO UPHOLD

SPECIFIC CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS REGARDING ASSEMBLY. LAO WILL THUS BE FORCED WITHIN NEXT THREE WEEKS TO COPE AGAIN WITH HISTORICAL TENSION BETWEEN LPF AND ASSEMBLY.

8. AFTER NEARLY FOUR WEEKS' RECESS, JCCIA IS SCHEDULED TO RESUME SESSIONS THIS WEEK. FIRST STEP WILL PROBABLY BE TO GET REORGANIZED. JCCIA HAD PROPOSED TO DELEGATE WORK TO THREE MAIN SUB-COMMITTEES:

- 1) MILITARY (TO SUPERVISE CEASEFIRE, EMPLANT STAKES, AND MONITOR WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES);
- 2) REFUGEES AND POWS; AND
- 3) NEUTRALIZATION OF VIENTIANE AND LUANG PRABANG.

FIRST TWO GROUPS HAVE NEVER REALLY ORGANIZED.

VIENTIANE SIDE HAD APPOINTED ITS CHAIRMEN (GENERALS BOUNTHIENG VENEVONGSOS AND ETAM SINGVONGSA, FOR MILITARY AND REFUGEES/POWS RESPECTIVELY); BUT LPF HAVE NOT YET MADE SUCH APPOINTMENTS. (GENERAL BOUNTHIENG, INCIDENTALLY, TOLD EMBOFF LAST WEEK THAT HE HAD RESIGNED HIS JCCIA JOB BECAUSE IT DID NOT CONFER RESPONSIBILITIES COMMENSURATE WITH HIS RANK.) IN ADDITION TO NAMING SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN, TWO SIDES WILL HAVE TO REVIEW DELEGATIONS TO FULL COMMISSION, SINCE SEVERAL MEMBERS-INCLUDING BOTH DELEGATION CHAIRMEN, SOTH PHETRASY AND SOUKAN VILAY-SARN--HAVE BEEN APPOINTED TO NEW PGNU. AFTER ORGANIZING, COMMISSION AND SUB-COMMITTEES WILL NO DOUBT HAVE TO ADOPT WORKING PLANS AND PRIORITIES. IN SHORT, JCCIA HAS TAKEN "TIME OUT" AND WE CAN ANTICIPATE TARDY START IN RETURN OF CAPTURED PERSONNEL, WHICH, UNDER TERMS OF PROTOCOL, WAS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IN THREE STAGES OVER 60-DAY PERIOD, FOLLOWING FORMATION OF GOVERNMENT. SEVENTEEN OF 20 DAYS IN FIRST STAGE HAVE ALREADY ELAPSED AND THERE IS NO SIGN OF ANY PREPARATIONS FOR RETURNING PRISONERS. WE HAVE EXPRESSED TO LEADERS ON BOTH LPF AND VIENTIANE SIDE OUR CONCERN THAT TWO SIDES PROMPTLY CARRY OUT PROTOCOL PROVISIONS ON RETURNING PRISONERS (ESPECIALLY THE SINGLE ACKNOWLEDGED AMERICAN POW, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 03210 02 OF 02 231513Z

EMMET KAY) AS WELL AS ON PROVIDING OVERDUE INFORMATION ON DICS AND PROSPECTIVE DATA ON MIAS. THE JCCIA MEETING THIS WEEK MAY OFFER A CLUE AS TO HOW EFFECTIVE OUR REPRESENTATIONS HAVE BEEN.

9. FINALLY, CABINET ITSELF MUST THIS WEEK FINALLY START TO SETTLE IN FOR THE LONG "PROVISIONAL" HAUL OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. AS MINISTERS AND DEPUTIES TACKLE THE SUBSTANCE OF THEIR WORK, THE NATURE AND TYPE OF LPF INFLUENCE WILL BECOME EVIDENT. CABINET DECISIONS ARE

REQUIRED SOON ON FEOF ARRANGEMENTS FOR 1974 (WHICH ARE TO SIGNED APRIL 30) AND DESIGNEES FOR AMBASSADOR-SHIPS IN WASHINGTON, NEW DELHI, SAIGON AND HANOI (WHICH FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS BEEN ASKED TO PROPOSE). THE LPF HAVE NOT SIGNALLED ANY MAJOR CONTENTION ON THESE OR OTHER ISSUES LIKELY TO COME BEFORE THE CABINET IN NEAR FUTURE. IT APPEARS, INSTEAD, THAT LIKELY FOCUS FOR POLITICAL MANEUVERING OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WILL BE THE EVOLVING INTER-RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CABINET, POLITICAL COUNCIL AND ASSEMBLY.
WHITEHOUSE

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